

Message Text

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SUBJECT: AFME STUDENT COUNSELING

REF: STATE 168616

FOLLOWING ARE MISSION'S ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS POSED IN
REFTEL ON AFME STUDENT COUNSELING.

A. NUMBER AND QUALITY FO STUDENT CONSELORS: IN ADDITION
TO AFME DIRECTOR PARKER, WHO SPENDS 20 PERCENT OF TIME
COUNSELING, ONE COUNSELOR, NADIA HELOU, WHO IS EXCELLENT
BUT HEAVILY BURDENED BY WORK IN BEIRUT AND DAMASCUS, AND
ONE SECRETARY WHO GIVES OUT FIRST STAGE COUNSELING
MATERIALS.

B. VOLUME OF STUDENTS HANDLED: IN FY'75, AFME PROVIDED
COUNSELING AND PLACEMENT ASSISTANCE FOR 2,750 STUDENTS.
THIS INCLUDED 680 APPLICATIONS TO U.S. INSTITUTIONS, AS
WELL AS SCHOLARSHIP ASSISTANCE FOR 39 STUDENTS OF WHOM
21 RECEIVED GRANTS, EXCLUDING CU/NEA FUNDED STUDENTS.
AFME ALSO TRANSLATED AND CERTIFIED 239 ARABIC AND FRENCH
EDUCATIONAL DOCUMENTS FOR U.S. COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES.
AFME ADMINISTERS TEFL IN BEIRUT.

C. IS COUNSELING ACTIVITY EFFICIENTLY MEETING COUNTRY'S
NEEDS: NO. WHILE VOLUME AFME HANDLES IS TREMENDOUS, IN-
DEPTH COUNSELING SUFFERS SINCE ONLY 1 1/5 COUNSELORS ARE
AVAILABLE. QUARTERS HAVE BEEN SO CRAMPED THAT STUDENTS
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CANNOT EVEN CUT DOWN ON STAFF TIME BY UTILIZING EXCELLENT

CATALOG AND REFERENCE COLLECTION THEMSELVES. WE UNDERSTAND, HOWEVER, AFME HAS FOUND LARGER QUARTERS AND IS CURRENTLY NEGOTIATING LEASE. WE NEED MORE AFME/EMBASSY ORIENTATION PROGRAMS AND MORE ACTIVE AFME ATTEMPTS TO REACH OUT TO STUDENTS WHO DO NOT KNOW ENOUGH TO SEEK COUNSELING. AFTER VISITING AFME, SOME STUDENTS COME TO US FOR MORE SPECIFIC COUNSELING WE BETTER ABLE PROVIDE. WHILE WE OCCASIONALLY SPOT INACCURACIES OR DIFFER ON CHOICE OF SCHOOLS, MARGIN OF ERROR IS VERY LOW, GIVEN EXTRAORDINARY VOLUME HANDLED BY HEOU.

D. WHAT IS COUNSELING PROGRAM'S RELEVANCE TO POST'S PROGRAM: SEVERAL YEARS AGO WE DELEGATED 90 PERCENT OF USIS COUNSELING TO AFME. IF THEY DON'T GET ADDITIONAL STAFF, BOTH QUANTITY AND QUALITY WILL SUFFER EVEN MORE OR WE WILL HAVE TO GET BACK INTO COUNSELING BUSINESS. THAT WOULD REQUIRE TWO NEW SLOTS, SINCE OUR ONE ACADEMIC EXCHANGES STAFFER HANDLES IVS, STUDENT AND SCHOLAR GRANTS, AND LARGE NUMBER OTHER CU RELATED ACTIVITIES, AS WELL AS SPECIALIZED COUNSELING. IT IS IN INTEREST OF POST, ESPECIALLY VISA SECTION (AS WELL AS DEPARTMENT AND OTHER USG AGENCIES), TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE COUNSELING, SINCE LARGEST PERCENTAGE OF PROBLEM CASES, EITHER BEFORE OR AFTER ARRIVAL U.S., STEMS FROM BAD OR NO COUNSELING AT THIS END. IT IS OBVIOUSLY IN POST'S INTEREST MAINTAIN GOOD IMAGE OF U.S. EDUCATION AND QUALITY OF GRADUATES. THIS STARTS WITH MATCHING RIGHT SCHOOL TO RIGHT STUDENT AND PREPARING HIM FOR EXPERIENCE.

E. RECOMMENDATIONS: AFME NEEDS ADDITIONAL AMERICAN-TRAINED COUNSELOR WHO CAN MOVE RIGHT INTO OPERATION, NOT SOMEONE WHO WILL BE TRAINED ON THE JOB. WHILE CURRENT COUNSELOR HELOU IS EXCELLENT, MORE RECENT EXPERTISE AND INFORMATION ON U.S. INSTITUTIONS IS NECESSARY.
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